

warned the administration, repeatedly warned the National Security Council, repeatedly warned the State Department as early as the spring of 2021 that the security situation was deteriorating rapidly, that the Taliban was gaining ground rapidly, and that there needed to be an evacuation.

Yet what did the White House do? Well, according to the findings in this report, nothing. Did they plan? No. Did they take action necessary? No. And so on August 26, there was a terrorist explosion at Abbey Gate. We lose those 13 marines. Hundreds of American civilians are left behind in a botched evacuation. And here we are. Yet we are asked to act as if nothing has happened, as if we should just go on, business as usual. Keep the conveyor belt of nominees to this Pentagon running with no votes, no votes on this floor, no debate on this floor; just wave them through; waive regular order; move it right along; nothing to see here. I am not willing to do that. I haven't been willing to do it for over a year.

I hope my colleagues see now, a year on, that I was serious in August of 2021 when I said I would not consent to waiving the rules to send more nominees to this Pentagon until something is done to get answers and, frankly, to change the culture because the truth is, we have a cultural problem in the whole military-industrial complex.

This is an entity, an organization, that has lied to the American people repeatedly over the years. They lied about Vietnam for a decade. They lied about Iraq. They lied about the true state of the war in Afghanistan. And now we are getting the same lies again, to the point that we can't even hold a hearing in public because the White House won't consent to it.

I don't really blame Chairman REED. He can't get witnesses to come testify in public because this White House doesn't want to say another word about what happened at Abbey Gate. We have a word for that. It is called a coverup, and it is time for it to stop.

Listen, much has been said about my blocking nominees. The truth is, I can't block any nominee. All of these nominees can be brought to the floor. They can't even be filibustered. It is just a matter of what the Senate majority leader wants to do. Sadly my side is not in the majority, and we are not going to be for the next 2 years. So if the Senate majority leader sees fit to vote on these nominees, he can at any time. But as to whether or not I will consent to waiving the rules and allowing these nominees to the Pentagon in leadership positions to be confirmed without even a vote—I will not until something changes at the Pentagon, until something is done about what happened at Abbey Gate.

I know that my colleague the chairman is acting in good faith. It is a privilege to serve with him on the committee. I know he is in a tough spot here because he has a White House that doesn't want to give an inch and

doesn't want to say a word. I would just say that I hope, with real oversight coming soon in the House of Representatives, that the Senate will see fit and see its way to doing its part and holding open hearings on this report, on this tragedy, and making sure it does not happen again.

With that, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

Mr. REED. Retaining my time, Mr. President, I disagree, obviously, with the Senator from Missouri.

The Senate Armed Services Committee has had extensive oversight on Afghanistan. The committee actions include seven public and closed hearings regarding the Afghan war, lessons learned, and ongoing regional counterterrorism requirements since the withdrawal last August. Senator HAWLEY had the opportunity to participate in each of these hearings.

The fiscal year 2022 National Defense Authorization Act contained a provision that mandated that the Department of Defense deliver quarterly briefings in both unclassified and classified form on the security situation in Afghanistan and ongoing counterterrorism efforts. The classified briefings have taken place on January 20, April 14, and July 21. The unclassified briefings have taken place on February 14 and April 25. Most recently, on October 19, the committee held unclassified and classified briefings, and Senator HAWLEY has full access to these briefings.

The fiscal year 2022 National Defense Authorization Act also contained a provision, section 1069, which requires the yearly assessment of our "over the horizon" counterterrorism capabilities in Afghanistan. The committee has received the first installment, and this, too, is accessible to all members of the committee.

The fiscal year 2022 NDAA further mandated the establishment of the Afghanistan War Commission, which will spend several years examining all aspects of the 20-year war in depth. Let me emphasize—the 20-year war in depth. All the Commissioners have been appointed. We expect the Commission to commence work in the near term.

I note that Senator HAWLEY indicated that beginning in 2020 there were reports that military leaders were warning of possible complications. That was during the term of President Trump.

I think also one of the issues that has to be looked at is the release of 5,000 Taliban fighters at the direction of President Trump and over the objections of the Afghan Government. Were they at Abbey Gate? Were they the leading forces who were moving in and surrounding Kabul?

This situation requires a long, detailed study. To focus on one event will create headlines but not information or knowledge that we can bring forward. The factors contributing to Abbey Gate

were long in the making, and unless we look at those factors over time, unless we look at the whole operation, I don't think we are going to get the kinds of insights we need.

So I respectfully disagree with Senator HAWLEY's objection, and I hope we can find a way to confirm Ms. JOHNSON.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, if I could just briefly build on the remarks of Chairman REED, never before has such a small number of Senators stood in the way of this large a number of nominees. The impact of this constant effort to hold up nominees to the State Department and the Department of Defense is to compromise the national security of this Nation; to try to rob from this administration, from this President, the ability to govern and to protect this Nation.

I would just remind my colleagues that what comes around goes around. I know right now some Republicans may delight in the President not having any personnel necessary to run Agencies because of this record number of holds that have been put on nominees by the Republican minority. But there will be a Republican President someday. There will be a Republican majority someday. And a handful of Democratic Senators will use the same tactics that are being used today to essentially rob from this administration its right to do the job it was elected to do by the American people, at great risk to American national security.

So my prerogative on this is that we should just change the rules and make it less easy for one Senator to hold up nominees who are supported by 90 to 95 percent of us and make it easier to proceed to a vote on nominees.

The Senator from Missouri wants to vote no on this nominee or others. That is his right, but we should come up with a process by which the entire administration is not ground to a halt by 1 or 2 of 100. We should just decide to do that because today this is hamstringing a Democratic President. But let me guarantee you, it will hamstring a Republican President someday as well.

YEMEN

Mr. President, I come to the floor today to provide remarks in support of Senator SANDERS' resolution that we will consider later today.

I have come to the floor many times to talk about the war in Yemen. I think I first came to the floor during the Obama administration, when very few people even knew there was a civil war in Yemen that the United States was participating in.

But let me just say again what I hope is common knowledge. The war in Yemen has been a national security disaster for the United States. It has now been ongoing for 8 years, and by no metric has this war accrued to the benefit of U.S. national security. Let me just give you a few windows into why this is true.

First and foremost, this is a humanitarian nightmare. The world's worst humanitarian disaster is in Yemen today.

The U.N. says that 66 percent of the country's population—and, by the way, this is not a small country, right; this is a country of 30-plus million people—right now, survive only because of emergency aid. Twenty-three thousand airstrikes have been launched just from 2015 to 2021, killing or injuring 18,000 civilians. Eighteen thousand civilians—10,000 of them children—have been hit, killed, or maimed by airstrikes.

There is a humanitarian nightmare inside Yemen today. That does not accrue to the benefit of the United States' security. Why? Because al-Qaida and ISIS operate inside Yemen; and when there is this kind of misery, when there is this kind of devastation, that is a breeding ground, that is fertile recruitment ground for the terrorist groups that are organizing against the United States and seeking to recruit those who are looking for answers. Al-Qaida, ISIS are growing stronger, and the misery in Yemen is growing deeper. And, at the same time, Iran is growing more influential.

This was not, at the outset, a proxy war between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia supports the old regime in Yemen, and Iran, which has been partners with the rebel group, the Houthis, that controls the capital, Sana'a, has become more embedded, as time goes on, with the Houthis. As the war lingers, as it persists year to year, Iran becomes more influential, has more power inside Yemen.

So if our interest in the region is to decrease Iran's power, then every year that this war persists, Iran gets more powerful inside Yemen. So if we care about the growth of Sunni terrorist groups, if we care about the growing influence of Iran, if we care about saving people from misery, destitution, and death, then we have to do everything in our power to wind down this war. What benefit is there to us, to the Yemeni people, to the Middle East region for this war to persist year after year after year?

Now, in 2019, we considered a similar resolution. It passed both the House and the Senate, a resolution to end U.S. participation in the Yemen war. It was vetoed by President Trump. We didn't have enough votes to override the veto.

Let's be honest. This is a very different moment than 2019. Why? Because President Biden has pursued a very different policy than President Trump. President Trump backed the Saudis. He, for a long time, refueled Saudi planes that were dropping bombs in Yemen. He sold them massive amounts of weapon. He embedded American forces with Saudi forces to help pick targets.

President Biden ran on a promise to end U.S. support for the war in Yemen, and, by and large, he made good on

that promise. The Biden administration does not sell Saudi Arabia weapons to be used in the Yemen war. They don't refuel the planes midair. They don't help with targeting. They don't help with intelligence.

But Senator SANDERS has correctly identified some lingering lines of cooperation between the United States and the Saudi-led coalition that do continue to help them perpetuate this war, including the work that we do to help maintain the Saudi Air Force.

This is a different moment than 2019, and we should give President Biden credit for pursuing a very different policy. The facts on the ground are different as well. There have been, for long stretches during the Biden administration, ceasefires in Yemen—ceasefires that we did not see during the Trump administration.

The Saudis, to their credit, have been more interested in peace during the Biden administration than they ever were during the Trump administration. That is, I believe, in part because they don't have a blank check from the U.S. regime any longer. In fact, as we stand here today, it is the Houthis that are the primary impediment to peace, not the Saudis. Now, the Saudis' interest in peace and deescalation, it comes and it goes. But today, as we speak, it is, in fact, the Houthis who need to make the commitments necessary to sit at the table and find a path to permanently end the fighting in Yemen and find a way for everyone in Yemen—Houthis included—to be able to live in peace, to have a government that everyone can call their own.

So why support this resolution if President Biden has pulled most all of our support for the war, if the primary barrier to a peaceful solution today is the Houthis? Well, I think it is pretty simple. I think we have seen the impact that we have when we withdraw our blank check. And, I think, so long as there are any lines of effort that the United States is involved in that continue this war, we are weaker as a nation. Practically, we are weaker because, every day this war persists, Iran gets stronger and the potential for Sunni extremist organizing becomes stronger. But we are also just morally weaker because, for us to be a participant in any way, shape, or form in a war with this kind of misery, it really shapes the way that people think about us in the region and around the world.

So I am here to support Senator SANDERS' resolution and urge my colleagues to vote for it, not because I believe that this is the same moment as 2019. It is a different moment. But I think it commands the United States to send a very clear message, and our message is that this war has to end.

The United States should not be involved in this war—not a little, not a lot. This war, every day it persists, makes us less safe and harms our credibility, and the Senate, I would argue, should pass this resolution.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MARKEY). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 5244

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, this Friday at midnight, the government will run out of funding. That leaves us with just a few options.

One, we could pass the massive, yet-to-be-drafted, Pelosi-Schumer omnibus spending package, leaving the outgoing Democratic House majority in charge of drafting the bill to fund the Federal Government for the balance of fiscal year 2023, despite the fact that voters sent a clear message this November disapproving of the fiscal direction of our Federal Government.

Two, we could, yet again, pass another short-term stopgap measure that just kicks the can down the road for one more week to allow more backroom negotiations to take place, in secret. To be clear, this accomplishes nothing. It is simply a way to whip up support for another inflated spending package.

So when I say it accomplishes nothing, that is not really true. It is very effective at doing some things.

It marshals very effectively the angst of hundreds of millions of Americans who don't want a government shutdown. A lot of these people depend on the Federal Government remaining open to process—whether it is the paychecks for soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines, or others who have contract with the government or receive payments from the government of one sort or another or otherwise impacted by the Federal Government's inability to operate during a shutdown. They all have something to worry about. They all have reasons to fear a shutdown. And those anxieties end up being transferred onto their elected representatives in the House of Representatives and in the Senate who in turn fear a shutdown for the same reasons and feel the collective weight of those concerns bearing down on them.

But there is a dual threat that takes place here. You see, those who may be coming to the Senate floor in the next day or two to propose exactly this, option 2—that is, to just kick the can down the road for another week, for another 1-week spending measure—will be coming down here, predictably, foreseeably, in the name of avoiding a shutdown.

But make no mistake, when saying that they want to delay spending, they want to delay any shutdown by another week, they are not really saying we don't want the threat of a shutdown. They are saying we want to move the threat of a shutdown, the possibility of a shutdown, closer to Christmas.

Why Christmas? Well, that is when the anxiety of the American people and

their elected representatives in Congress are at their maximum. That is where we all feel it the most. We all feel the pressure to get something done the most. And that is also where Members of Congress, being human, understandably, want to be able to get home in time for Christmas, to spend the Christmas holidays with their families.

And it is this dual threat that very often, year after year, is used to persuade Members of Congress to vote for a spending bill that spends too much money and that does so through a mechanism that they have had no part in; that they have been excluded from; that they would never vote for in the absence of this dual threat of a shutdown at Christmastime.

No, this isn't right. When we do that to the American people, what you are really doing is cutting them out of the process. When you cut the people's elected representatives in Congress who have been elected by the American people to take care of these things for them so that they don't have to worry about it and then you tell them we are not going to give those you elect any opportunity to have meaningful input into a spending bill which we are going to present to them at Christmastime in order to force a nonexistent consensus behind something they know they shouldn't vote for, that is wrong. It has gone on over and over again, and it has to stop. It must stop now. So that is option 2—suboptimal, to say the least.

Option 3. We could do the right thing, and we could pass a continuing resolution that keeps the government funded, maintaining current spending levels until after we have sworn in the new Congress, including the Republican House majority, early next year.

It is only this latter option—only the third option—that makes any sense at all. And it is only this third option that is fair to voters. You see, for the last 2 years, we have seen unprecedented inflation driven by reckless government spending, and we have seen that moving forward in a way that has crushed American families. Our national debt has grown during those 2 years by about \$4 trillion, reaching an astronomical \$31 trillion—a figure that we just reached within the last few days.

In Utah, inflation costs the average household a thousand dollars a month every single month, relative to the day that Joe Biden took office. They are not, for the most part, people who just have an extra thousand dollars to burn, nor is the extra thousand dollars a month going toward luxury items. No, it is just groceries, housing, gasoline, healthcare—the basic things that the American people need in order to live.

Simply put, the American people can't afford the policies of the last few years. They certainly can't afford the kinds of spending bills that get passed when we use this dual threat of the shutdown threatened at Christmastime under an artificially imposed deadline.

Unsurprisingly, American voters cast their votes and in so doing signaled

that they want the government to go in a new direction. After listening to an exhaustive list of excuses from the Biden administration, blaming inflation on everything from the pandemic to Putin, the American people saw through the smoke and mirrors. They voted for accountability and made it clear that they expect their elected representatives to be responsible stewards of taxpayer dollars.

Unfortunately, if this body just goes right ahead and passes another omnibus spending bill, a bill that we know is coming, a bill that we know is going to be thousands of pages long, a bill that we know that we will receive, at the most, maybe a day or two before we are expected to vote on it, with no intervening committee debate or discussion or opportunity for amendment—this body, if it chooses to enact such legislation, will be ignoring those legitimate desires on the part of the voters.

We are witnessing a conspicuous recurring trend, whereby leaders use the threat of a government shutdown to pressure Members into voting for inflated spending provisions without even time to read the bill, much less without giving them any time to consult with those they represent about how they feel about that spending and those policies.

So does this tactic remind you of anything? Well, it should. How about Speaker PELOSI's now infamous statement about ObamaCare when she said: You know, we have to pass the bill in order to find out what is in it. We all know how that turned out—not well.

Like ObamaCare, the resulting omnibus legislation that results from that kind of attitude, that kind of dismissive approach—dismissive not just to individual Members but of those whom they represent—always contains ideologically driven provisions, utterly unrelated to the budget, many of which could never pass if they had to withstand the light of day if they had to be voted on of their own merit.

We cannot, we must not, we should never use the threat of a government shutdown to force through policy changes that could never survive a vote on their own merit.

I believe we should pass—we must pass—a clean continuing resolution, one that will take us into the next Congress. Failure to do so will lock the remainder of this fiscal year into a pattern in which liberal policies and an inflationary spending agenda, crammed through by unaccountable Members of Congress, many of whom have just lost reelection or didn't seek it—all those things will descend upon the American people in a most unfavorable and unwelcomed way. We can't let that happen. I don't want to be any part of that. I don't think most of our colleagues on either side of the aisle do.

Not only would it be poor form and unwise and inconsiderate and really unkind for Congress to pass a massive spending bill, but it would also be without precedent in modern U.S. history.

You know, since 1954, the party in control of the House of Representatives has shifted from one party to another a total of just five times since 1954. In exactly zero of those instances did Congress go back after that election and during a lameduck session enact sweeping, comprehensive spending legislation. Not one instance since 1954 has that happened. Not once has there been an instance where Congress did that before a newly elected House majority could be sworn in.

We can pass a continuing resolution that doesn't include any of the new partisan agenda items that either side has proposed. It would keep the government running until the new Congress can develop a full-year discretionary budget—one that is agreeable to both sides or at least has been adequately vetted on both sides and with our constituents, with input from Members of both political parties and both Chambers of Congress.

I urge my colleagues to support the passage of this short-term continuing resolution that maintains current spending levels until the new Congress takes office. Doing so will ensure that we listen to the people's voices and that the incoming House majority has the opportunity to make the spending decisions that are in the best interests of the American people. We owe them nothing less.

Mr. President, to that end, as in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. 5244, which is at the desk; I further ask that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, and I will, but let me explain why. The bill offered by my colleague on the other side of the aisle is shortsighted and premature.

We have been working on this omnibus for months. I would have been happy to, among the 50 or 60 Senators of both parties, if they had sat down and talked to me about what might be in it. I would have been happy to have heard from him, too, but I know he had other pressing duties and didn't have time to.

But I am afraid it would unnecessarily punt our basic responsibilities even further down the road. Vice Chairman SHELBY, Chair DELAUNO, and I continue to trade offers and negotiate an omnibus spending bill with the Democrats and Republicans who have worked with us, and we believe we are close to a bipartisan, bicameral agreement. Reaching this agreement now is important for Americans in every State across the country.

I know in my State of Vermont, in my hometown—my farmhouse in Middlesex, VT—it was 20 degrees. Next week, it is going to get colder. With

the cost of natural gas and heating oil up more than 25 percent, families across my State are sitting down at their kitchen tables trying to figure out how they are going to afford to heat their homes and feed their families. Groceries are up more than 10 percent. They are making these decisions right now because they do not have the luxury of simply kicking the can down the road. They need assistance now, not months from now, if at all. They are not the ones who got the benefit from the huge Trump tax cut which increased the deficit but gave money to the highest level of income in our country.

Reaching this agreement now is important because in my home State, opioid deaths are on pace to surpass last year's grim toll. I don't think there is a Senator on this floor who hasn't seen opioid deaths go up in their State. We have seen it throughout the country. And I am not going to stand in the way of blocking money that might help bring those opioid deaths down because Vermont is not alone in this fight against this scourge. You cannot name a State in this country, if they are honest, that is not facing this scourge. Communities across the country host grieving families and people struggling with addiction who need new resources now, not months from now, if at all. That is Republicans, Democrats, Independents, everybody.

These communities are also pleading for resources to support State and local law enforcement. Having spent 8 years in law enforcement, I know what is needed. In fact, most of my friends on the other side of the aisle claim to support law enforcement. Well, if they really mean it, they should pass an omnibus agreement now, which would mean we could get more than 1,500 more police officers on the streets and provide law enforcement new and needed resources now, not months from now, if at all.

Our Nation's veterans need us to act now. Everybody claims they are in support of them—as I am, as our Presiding Officer is, as most Senators are. If we do not do our jobs, the bipartisan PACT Act will go underfunded and VA medical care will fall at least \$7.5 billion short. Our Nation's veterans deserve to have the promises we made them fulfilled now, not months from now, if at all.

Victims of natural disasters like Hurricanes Ian and Fiona need us to act now. A continuing resolution would delay aid to these communities by at least 6 weeks.

Now, this week, the Senate will pass the NDAA. It will receive bipartisan praise because of what it says for our armed services. Well, I would remind my colleagues that the NDAA makes many promises, but without an omnibus appropriations bill, it is a broken promise; \$76 billion for national defense will be left on the Republican cutting room floor—\$76 billion for national defense will be left on the Republican cutting room floor.

I could take up the entire day talking about why this short-term CR is a dereliction of our sworn duty, a failure for the American people, a temporary solution that promises to run headlong into even more difficult problems.

But I will end by saying that Vice Chairman SHELBY, Chair DELAURO, and I are close to an agreement. The American people sent us here to do our jobs, not kick the can down the road, not make statements on the floor, but to do our work.

So for these reasons, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Indiana.

Mr. BRAUN. It is going to be real easy, real short.

In November, the House of Representatives was returned back to Republicans. It was in a much wider kind of popular margin when you add up the votes that we won across the country through the House of Representatives, slimmer in terms of the number of seats we picked up, but we got it back.

Why would Republicans go along with a huge spending bill like this one? It has happened every year since I have been here—no budgeting, no appropriations that even an appropriator like myself can look at because it is done behind closed doors.

And all we have got to do is get this into the next Congress.

Congress funds the government through CRs all the time for the wrong reason—because they don't do the homework; they don't do the regular order. It kicks the can down the road consistently—standard operating procedure.

It is a slap in the face to those voters to let the outgoing House majority set the agenda for the next 10 months.

We shouldn't fund the government with huge omnibus bills in the first place, and we shouldn't give PELOSI—current Speaker PELOSI—a going-away present when she has been part of the process for all these years. We should actually do a budget like it is supposed to be done, and we should not do this as we are heading into a new Congress.

I yield back to the Senator from Utah.

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, I yield to the Senator from Wisconsin.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin.

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, you will notice that the senior Senator from Vermont didn't talk about overall spending numbers.

I would ask the President—I would ask anybody listening to these floor speeches today: Do you know how much the Federal Government spent last year?

I have been asking that question of my colleagues. I have been asking that question of journalists here in Washington, DC, people who report on the dealings on the floor, and the vast majority cannot answer that question.

So the question you all ought to be asking yourself is, Why can't you answer that question?

It is not your fault. The reason nobody knows how much the Federal Government spent in total last year—virtually no one knows it—is that we never talk about it. We are the largest financial entity in the world, and we never talk about how much we spend in total. We talk about little bits and pieces. We talk about \$6 billion here, \$76 billion there—no doubt, necessary funding for top priorities. But we don't spend the time talking about how we are mortgaging our children's future.

I have got a couple of charts that I would like to display.

This first chart shows over 20 years of spending history, going back to the year 2002, when the Federal Government spent, in total, a little more than \$2 trillion.

If we would have just increased spending from that point by population growth and the rate of inflation, last year we would have spent a little under \$3.8 trillion.

If you go to the year 2008, when we spent just under \$3 trillion, and once again just grew spending by population and inflation, last year we would have spent \$4.4 trillion.

If you go back to 2016, when we were spending \$3.8 trillion—under \$4 trillion—and grew that by just the rate of growth and the population rate of inflation, last year we would have spent about \$4.8 trillion.

Instead, last year, we spent \$6.3 trillion.

Now, I realize—and you can see on this chart—that, the last 3 years, spending was heavily impacted by COVID relief, close to \$6 trillion worth.

But in 2019, before the COVID pandemic, we spent about \$4.4 trillion.

I have another chart I would like to put up here that puts this all in perspective.

This breaks down spending between discretionary and mandatory plus interest, and then you have total outlays.

Again, if you look at 2019, total outlay is \$4.4 trillion. So because of COVID, the next year we spent an additional \$2.1 trillion—\$6.5 trillion. In 2021, \$6.8 trillion; last year, \$6.3 trillion.

Now, I heard President Biden say the pandemic is over. I think most of us have gotten back to our normal lives. That is a good thing. Why haven't we gone back to a normal spending level?

I don't know exactly what the total spending will be for fiscal year 2023. I do know that we are 2½ months into the fiscal year. We have not brought up one appropriations bill on the floor of the Senate for debate, for amendments—not one. We are operating on a continuing resolution.

I hear all the time that these continuing resolutions are such a terrible way to do business. I agree. It shows the dysfunction—the complete dysfunction—which is leading to these out-of-control spending numbers.

You would think, now that the pandemic is over, that we would return to a more normal level of spending.

Had we just grown the 2019 level by, again, the rate of population growth, the rate of inflation, we would be spending about \$4.8 trillion this year, but it appears—again, we don't know; there are a couple of people negotiating this; the rest of us are completely outside of the process—that we are going to have some massive omnibus spending bill dropped on our desks, and we expect to vote on it in a day or two, or maybe just hours. But it is going to be somewhere around \$6 trillion.

Have we literally just increased the baseline since the beginning of the pandemic by \$1.6 trillion? That is a 36-percent increase.

I will just put this in perspective. Again, had we grown this just by inflation and population growth—that would be a reasonable way to put some kind of constraints on what we are spending—that would be \$4.8 trillion.

Last year, the Federal Government raised in revenue \$4.9 trillion.

Again, I can't predict what revenue is going to be in 2023, but based on 2022 revenue, if we are only talking about \$4.8 trillion, we would actually have a surplus as opposed to a massive deficit almost guaranteed to be more than \$1 trillion.

My final point is this. And I know Senator SCOTT also is in the business world, and a number of Senators have been. If we were looking at this as, let's say, a division that had a problem, that had to spend a lot more money—a fire, some kind of real issue with the business where they had to drag increased spending over the last 2 or 3 years—but that spending issue had been resolved, and that division came to us having spent \$4.4 million in 2019 and now that the problem has been resolved, now they want to spend \$6 million, I can guarantee you we would be looking for a lot more detail. We would be spending a lot more time in terms of why in the world would we be increasing our base budget by 36 percent now that the danger or the problem has passed.

So in the business world, in the private sector, where I and Senator SCOTT came from, we would be spending a lot of time analyzing this. But here, in Washington, DC, the world's capital of dysfunction—of monetary and budgetary dysfunction—we don't even know what we are spending, and we are not even supposed to know because the powers that be are negotiating some massive omnibus bill, and they are going to jam us up against the Christmas holidays and ask for an up-or-down vote. That is outrageous.

This process—this horribly broken, dysfunctional process—must end, which is why I completely agree with Senator LEE's amendment.

Let's pass a continuing resolution. As much as I hate them, as much as that signals dysfunction, it will allow us the time to actually take a look at, debate, and question: Why in the world are we talking about \$6 trillion of

spending when, at most, looking back to 2019, growing that by inflation and population growth, we ought to be talking somewhere in the neighborhood of 4.8, certainly under \$5 trillion, and maybe looking at the prospect for the first time in many, many years of balancing a budget?

That is the attitude we ought to be taking. That is the debate we need to have. We need to have time for that debate, which is why I support Senator LEE's amendment.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President, let me begin with a simple question: When are we going to say enough?

The American people are saying it. Heck, even traditionally liberal, mainstream news outlets are getting there.

But here in Congress, it is nothing but business as usual. We just keep letting it pile up month after month, year after year. Now it is burying our country.

The "it" should be obvious. I am talking about America's massive Federal debt, now more than \$31 trillion. It has grown by nearly \$5 trillion since President Biden took office, and it was growing like a weed before that too.

We should all be disgusted with the reckless spending in Washington that has caused this massive debt.

Just look at what it is doing to our country. Historic inflation is raging across America, hurting families and businesses, and pushing the American Dream out of reach, as prices skyrocket and interest rates follow closely behind.

Reckless spending approved by this Chamber and our colleagues in the House has caused this.

I have been in the Senate for almost 4 years. In this time, I have talked a lot about my childhood. Maybe you have heard my story of someone who was born to a single mom, grew up poor, and lived in public housing.

It is a hard place to start your life, and, today, folks in the same situation are struggling more than ever to get by and make ends meet as they deal with sky-high inflation. In most places across the world, people who grow up like me have no hope of being anything but what they were born into—for me, that was poor and watching my mom struggle every day to get by. That is untrue in America.

This is the greatest Nation on Earth because a kid who grows up watching their parents struggle and living in public housing can work hard and be anything.

But that promise isn't guaranteed. We have to protect that by being responsible with taxpayer money and not allowing inflation and debt to ruin us.

Throughout my life, I have run businesses big and small, from a couple of hundred employees to hundreds of thousands of employees. Here is one thing that doesn't change no matter how big you get: If you don't live with-

in your means, you fail. Same goes for any family. No family or business in any of our States gets to burn through money with no consequences. The only place that has become acceptable is here in Washington. Why? Because Congress stopped doing what it got elected to do.

As I said, I have been in Washington for about 4 years now. One thing I have learned is that in Washington, compromise means everyone gets everything so nobody has to make a tough choice. The result is gross fiscal mismanagement and unsustainable debt. Instead of standing up to this broken status quo in Congress—something I think most of us ran on—too many people get elected, come to Washington, and become a rubber stamp for more spending.

So here we are again, just days away from a government funding deadline. Some of our colleagues are again pushing a massive omnibus—what we are calling the Pelosi-Schumer spending bill—which keeps this inflation-bomb deficit spending going.

I asked earlier: When are we going to say "enough?" Will it be when the deficit hits \$35 trillion, \$45 trillion, \$50 trillion? Can you imagine \$50 trillion worth of debt? No. The answer has to be now. We say enough is enough today. And we should start by saying no to a massive omnibus spending bill and approving a simple continuing resolution being offered by my good friend Senator LEE of Utah.

Doing this allows the new Congress to put together a real budget that is balanced, which is what we should be doing anyway.

I don't like continuing resolutions any more than I think anyone here does. Since my first day in the Senate, I have been vocal about needing to pass a budget—a full budget—that is balanced and gets America's finances in order. But that is not going to happen in the next 3 days or before the next Congress begins, for that matter.

So the thought of passing a Pelosi-Schumer spending bill now, just weeks before a new Republican majority takes power in the House, is insane. It is as bad an idea as I have heard of up here.

It also goes against decades of precedent. As Senator LEE has said, since 1954, control of the House has changed five times, and there has never been an instance of Congress passing an omnibus spending bill before a new House majority takes power.

Given that America is now in more debt than ever before and inflation is the highest it has been in 40 years, why should we choose now to break precedent and green-light more reckless spending?

And let's not forget what Democrats wish to do with the hard-earned tax dollars of American families. The last time Democrats passed a spending bill, they approved \$80 billion so that the IRS can hire 87,000 new agents to target working families and small businesses. Worse still, Democrats are now

forcing every American to report any transaction of \$600 or more to the IRS, giving the Federal Government unprecedented access into the personal finances of American families. We can expect more of the same from them now.

Maya Angelou was right when she said:

When someone shows you who they are, believe them the first time.

Now, we just heard what our Democrat colleagues are saying in objecting to this commonsense solution to avoid a government shutdown. They are saying that our proposal will cut services. Passing the CR into next year will not result in any cuts to funding or services; it will simply continue government operations just as they are today.

Here is the deal. For too long, the failed and ridiculous thinking in Washington has been that budgets don't matter and inflation doesn't matter because voters will never tie wasteful spending to inflation. The only way to get some things done is to shove them into a giant spending bill negotiated in secret and pass it before anyone has any time to read it. That is wrong, and the American public is disgusted with this. It is not how any family or business operates.

In the real world, you make plans, you meet deadlines, you make choices and live within your means, because failing to do so means failing to survive and prosper.

Congress shouldn't be treated any differently. Congress has been broken and unaccountable for too long.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, in closing this discussion, I just want to respond to a couple of points made by my friend and colleague, the distinguished Senator from Vermont.

Senator LEAHY is someone I have really enjoyed working with throughout my 12 years in the Senate, and I will miss him when he is gone.

I respectfully but very strongly disagree with his decision to object to this commonsense approach toward avoiding a government shutdown, and I want to make clear just a few things.

No. 1, this continuing resolution is not preclusive of anything else he may want to do. It doesn't preclude anyone from still working to pass an omnibus. It, rather, provides a safety net so that Congress doesn't produce a government shutdown and, just as importantly, so that Members don't feel coerced into this dual threat of having to navigate between the Scylla of a threatened shutdown and the Charybdis of people having to cancel their holiday plans with their families. That is what we are trying to avoid. So it is a false choice to say that this doesn't allow for anything else. That is just not true.

Now, I disagree with him about his desire to pass an omnibus because that omnibus doesn't yet exist. There still isn't an agreement on it. The bill has

yet to exist and has yet to see the light of day, not only to the public but to all but four Members of the United States Congress. That is what I object to.

But make no mistake: What we are proposing today, what we are reasonably suggesting today, would not preclude a subsequent omnibus; it would just take away the shutdown threat—which is exactly my point, which is exactly my concern. When we do this sort of thing—without speaking to anyone's subjective motives; I can't read other people's minds, but I do know that this pattern has been used before. It is a tried-and-true process by which people convince their colleagues to vote for things they would never otherwise vote for because, typically, we don't like to vote on things that we haven't seen and spend trillions of dollars.

My colleague from Vermont also refers to the fact that he has had lengthy conversations with a number of colleagues coming to him with their concerns. That is great. I appreciate that. That is a very appropriate thing for any Senator to do, particularly the chairman of the Appropriations Committee. As great as that is, that isn't legislating. That doesn't substitute for actual floor debate, and it sure as heck doesn't substitute for transparency and accountability, allowing the American people to see what they are going to be spending their money on.

We are going to get, in a matter of days, probably in about a week—usually, they don't give us more time than that—a bill. It will be 2,000 or 3,000 pages long, and it will spend probably 1.6 or \$1.7 trillion.

And the American people understand that 2,000 or 3,000 pages of appropriations legislative text does not read like a fast-paced novel. Nobody is going to have a chance to review this, and that is the problem. So the fact that he is meeting with individual Members, hearing their concerns, and talking about possible tradeoffs—that is great, but it doesn't provide what the American people need.

Next, he appeals to the sense of the good things that will be in the bill, talking about the need to fund efforts to combat opioid abuse and addiction and the need to fund law enforcement—great things, great things—but we haven't seen the legislative text, and the fact that there may be good things in the bill funding good causes that would benefit good, deserving beneficiaries doesn't mean that the bill as a whole makes any sense.

He also says, with some defiance and indignation, that he is not going to settle for another short-term CR, that short-term CRs are a bad way of doing things, and he is not OK with a short-term CR.

It is a good point. I am not either. I don't like them. It is a default.

But we have been on a short-term CR since September 30. That is 2½ months. So I don't comprehend exactly where he would draw the line between a short-term CR that is acceptable and

one that isn't. So 2½ months is just fine but a few more weeks isn't?

I suspect it is going to be fine when somebody comes to the floor and asks for a 1-week, short-term CR—a 1-week, short-term spending bill.

That is wrong. Why? Because it moves the threat of a shutdown that much closer to Christmas when Members most want to get out of town and when the American people and those they elect to represent them here are most concerned about a shutdown.

That is coercive. That isn't trying to avoid a shutdown. No. That is playing with fire. That is presenting as a feature, not a bug, the risk of a shutdown. It is wrong, and it has to stop.

Look, the objective today—I hope he will reconsider. This isn't right. We know it isn't right. Those who elected us, whether we are Republicans or Democrats deserve better. They don't deserve this.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. (Mr. PETERS). The Senator from Nevada.

#### IMMIGRATION REFORM

Ms. ROSEN. Mr. President, I rise today to express my strong and continued support for Dreamers, TPS recipients, and immigrant communities in Nevada and across our Nation.

It has been decades since Congress has passed real immigration reform, and almost a decade since we have made a real attempt at taking action to provide a permanent solution for those communities and allow families—allow families to stay together. As a result, our broken immigration system has been left with a patchwork of policies that are outdated and inefficient. This is why Congress needs to take action now on comprehensive immigration reform, so we can, once and for all, fix this severely broken system.

It shouldn't be a partisan issue. We are talking about families who deserve peace of mind about their future. They shouldn't be subjected to the uncertainty they currently face every single day.

Unfortunately, some of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle refuse to come to the table to work with us on comprehensive immigration reform. They would rather leave Dreamers in limbo and have this issue for their own political gain than work toward solutions.

But a number of reasonable Republicans have said in the past that they do support a legislative fix to protect our Dreamers and their futures. So let's start there and work together to provide an immediate, permanent legislative solution for DACA recipients right now—right now—while at the same time, we keep working for more comprehensive immigration reform.

In the 10 years since the DACA program first went into effect, it has protected nearly 600,000 Dreamers and allowed them to make a home and build a life and a future here in our country. In my State of Nevada alone, thousands of individuals and families rely on DACA to live, work, and raise a